

"Swinging Around the Circle"

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ISSN 0003-4827

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Recommended Citation

The Annals of Iowa, 10(2) (Apr. 1872): 107-110

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

accomplished, and enjoy that satisfaction which emanates from a consciousness of success the more abundant that, in advancing individual prosperity, it has also enhanced public good.

The heart of such a man cannot grow old, nor will his memory die.

✓
"SWINGING AROUND THE CIRCLE."

✓
BY R. B. GROFF, MARENGO, IOWA.

A PERSON lost on the prairies is very apt to "swing around the circle." The fact has often been observed, but a satisfactory reason (to my mind, at least) has never been assigned. I admit that when a man's mind becomes bewildered or confused, he is not as apt to think correctly as in his calmer, reflective moments. But why should this be a reason why he should go *wrong* sooner than *right*, when they are both equally the subject of choice? This certainly is a curious manifestation of mental phenomena, and worthy of a more thorough investigation.

I remember the first summer I was in Iowa, one night after I had gone to bed, a man knocked rather violently at my door. I asked, "Who is there?" He answered promptly, giving his name, and stating that he wanted to go home to his own house. After a few more remarks, I knew the man by his voice, and arose and admitted him to my log fire. He soon got warm and felt more comfortable, and then commenced telling me that he had been trying to find his house for a long time; "But I cannot see it," said he. "I am not far from home, am I?" He stood about six feet in his boots, had a light, greyish beard, and large, full, rolling eye. From the eyebrows to the summit of the head there was a grade of about forty-five degrees. The hair had

dropped off of the top of his head, and lodged around the base of the tightly-stretched skin-covered cranium, and his countenance glowed with excitement. He was spare built, dressed in linsey-woolsey shirt, collar open, wamus tied in front with a big knot, and his understandings were partially covered with cowhide boots.

"Why, neighbor," said I, "you are within half a mile of home."

"Is that so?" said he. "Why, I will go," starting out of the house in a hurried manner, "but you must come and show me the road."

I went, and not only placed him on the road, but showed him his own light, brightly burning in his own window. He started off on a run, he was so desirous to get home.

I returned to my house, covered up the fire, undressed, and retired to rest, but had not slept, when I heard a violent knocking at the door. I arose, unlocked the door, and admitted the stranger, when, lo and behold, there stood the same, identical man. I stirred up the fire, and he, while warming himself, told me that he had "tried his *best* to go home, but couldn't quite come it. I got against a fence, climbed that, got into a field, got out, went over a large piece of fresh breaking, went through a piece of woods, crossed a creek, and this is the same house, and you are the same man I was with some time ago. This is the fourth time to-night that I have been around on this rough, crooked, curious road."

Now this man had been swinging around a circle, about three miles in extent. He had been around four times, making twelve miles the poor man had travelled to find his house. After he was sufficiently warm, I went with him until within one hundred yards of his house. That time he reached home. I was afraid to let him go alone, for fear he might perish in the cold, while swinging around the circle the fifth time.

I remember once of attempting to cross the prairie in a dense fog. There was a dim road, but as the fog was heavy

and the grass tall and coarse, I soon lost the track. I had only about five miles to go, but I went forward with such masterly activity that I spent five hours in making that distance. The road got plainer, and I expected every moment to get home—the road *was* getting better, for *I made it myself*, by swinging around a circle about one mile in diameter.

Hunters often get cooped up in the curves of rivers. These peninsulas are often very narrow at the neck, but extend many miles in the circuit. They are generally thickly clothed with vegetation, and decorated with a wilderness of wild vines. Game secreted from human sight among the profusion of leaves, prevents the hunter from having a direct shot. As he goes around the verdant walls, while no breeze stirs the leaves so as to reveal the object of his search, his mind becomes bewildered, forgets the marks by which he entered the bend, loses his reckoning, and commences to "swing around the circle." I knew a man that went around for many hours. He seemed to be completely fenced in by water, and there seemed no way to get out. "And yet," said he, "I was walking on a well beaten path, which was each moment becoming *more bright*. At one point I had to take hold of a basswood limb with my right hand, while I carried my double-barreled shot-gun with my left, to prevent my stepping too close to the sandy bank of the river. On the last round I observed the mark of a boot heel in the soft, moist earth. I then thought other hunters were in the bottom, and decided to call to them for aid. I called aloud, but no answer came, save the echo, flashed back from the distant hills. I wandered on, coming to the same boot-mark for the fifth time. I took off my boot, fitted the heel to the impression, and then, for the first time in my life, the conviction flashed on my mind that I was making *my own path*, by swinging around the circle. I turned around, took the range of the sun's slanting beams, walked briskly forward, crossed the neck of the peninsula, was soon out on the open prairie, and was never again fenced up in such a place by rolling water."

I saw a man in Lancaster county, Pennsylvania, offer to bet twenty-five dollars that he would take any man into a twenty-five acre field, tie up his eyes, turn him three times around in the center of the field, and then if the man taking the bet could touch the fence on either side, the twenty-five dollars were his; if not, he was to forfeit an equal sum. I saw a man take the bet on the above conditions. I went out, with a number of others, to see the curious experiment. The man was blindfolded near the center of the field, turned around three times, and then started; and he did not go ten steps straight forward until he commenced leaning to the left, and continued to do so until he made a complete circle. He went round and round, each time contracting the circle, until he came near the point from which he started. We had to roll or walk out of the way, or he would have tramped upon us. After nearly two hours' labor he gave up the bet, declaring that he could not reach the fence.

I have often thought if I had another such an opportunity, I would insist on the subject being left alone until he came to the center of the circle, to see if he would stand still, or commence enlarging, as he had contracted, the circle — what phenomenon mind would make the visible body assume, after it had finished the business of swinging around the circle.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF NORTH-WESTERN IOWA. ✓

BY N. ✓ LEVERING, GREENWOOD, MO.

(Continued from page 41.)

IN the latter part of August, 1861, the guards again became eager for the war-path, and made a campaign to Sioux Falls, returning by the way of Spirit Lake, and again we were detailed on duty at home, and had to forego the pleasure of another memorable campaign, for which the guards were somewhat notorious — their campaigns resulting in but little pain to the enemy.

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